

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0000
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 06493

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JIDDA FOR AMBASSADOR ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, JO, US, XF
SUBJ: MIDEAST NEGOTIATIONS - DISCUSSIONS WITH JORDANIAN
COURT CHIEF SHARAF

SUMMARY: PRIOR TO FORTHCOMING ATHERTON VISIT, JORDANIAN
COURT CHIEF SHARAF WAS CAREFUL TO WITHHOLD OFFICIAL GOJ
JUDGEMENT ON CAMP DAVID SUMMIT BUT INDICATED GENERAL
JORDANIAN FEELING IS CONCERN IT MAY NOT PRODUCE POSITIVE
RESULTS, GIVEN CONSISTENTLY INTRANSIGENT POSITION OF
BEGIN GOVERNMENT AND SOME ARAB CONCERN OVER "EROSION"
OF U.S. BACKING FOR SOME ARAB POSITIONS IN RECENT MONTHS.
HOWEVER SHARAF SAID JORDAN'S OVERALL POSITION, EXPRESSED
RECENTLY TO SAUDIS, IS TO CONTINUE TO FIND WAYS TO KEEP
DOOR OPEN TO PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND IMPLIED HE HOPED
SUMMIT AND POST-SUMMIT COULD SERVE THIS PURPOSE.
END SUMMARY.

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1. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH SHARAF ON AUGUST 10, I WENT OVER
VARIOUS U.S. PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON FORTHCOMING CAMP DAVID
SUMMIT (E.G. SECRETARY'S "FULL PARTNER" PRESS CONFERENCE
AND SPOKESMAN STATEMENT THAT SUMMIT FRAMEWORK COMES FROM
RES 242) AND TOLD SHARAF I WAS SURE AMBASSADOR ATHERTON
WOULD HAVE A COMPLETE REPORT FOR KING HUSSEIN ON MATTER
IN FORTHCOMING AUGUST 12 MEETING.

2. SHARAF WAS CAUTIOUS IN EXPRESSING HIS REACTION TO SUMMIT, UNDOUBTEDLY WISHING TO LEAVE THE BURDEN OF DISCUSSIONS TO KING HUSSEIN-ATHERTON TALKS. SHARAF MENTIONED THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM AMONG MANY IN JORDAN THAT THE SUMMIT WILL ACHIEVE POSITIVE RESULTS, BASED PRIMARILY ON JORDANIAN CONVICTION THAT BEGIN WILL NEVER DROP HIS INTRANSIGENCE ON WEST BANK, COMBINED WITH A GENERAL ARAB FEELING THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN "EROSION" IN THE U.S. POSITION ON MIDEAST NEGOTIATIONS ISSUES IN RECENT MONTHS. RATHER THAN "REWARDING" SADAT FOR HIS FLEXIBILITY AND COURAGEOUS INITIATIVE, THE U.S. IS PERCEIVED AS BEING MANOEUVERED TO GIVE MORE AND MORE CONCESSIONS TO BEGIN BECAUSE OF HIS INTRANSIGENCE.

3. LATER IN CONVERSATION, SHARAF ACCOUNTED FOR SADAT'S SEEMING ABOUT FACE IN ACCEPTING PRESIDENT CARTER'S INVITATION FOR DIRECT TALKS AT THE SUMMIT BY SAYING THAT SADAT REALLY COULD NOT TURN DOWN SUCH AN INVITATION BY PRESIDENT CARTER EVEN IF THERE ARE DOUBTS AS TO THE OUTCOME.

4. SHARAF SAID HE SAW TWO OUTCOMES TO SUMMIT IF IT FAILS TO ACHIEVE A SUBSTANTIVE BREAK THROUGH: (1) A RAPID MOVEMENT AWAY FROM PEACE PROCESS, OR (2) BECAUSE OF THE HIGH STAKES INVOLVED POSSIBLY A PAPERING OVER OF THE
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FAILURE IN ORDER TO AVERT DETERIORATION OF THE AREA SITUATION. SHARAF IMPLIED HE WOULD FAVOR THIS COURSE AND FELT ALL THE PARTIES MIGHT ALSO. SHARAF DID NOT SHOW GREAT CONVICTION THAT ANY SUBSTANTIVE U.S. POSITION COMING OUT OF THE TALKS WOULD BE SUFFICIENT EITHER TO FORCE THE ISRAELIS TO CHANGE THEIR POSITION OR, EVEN FAILING THAT, TO GIVE SUFFICIENT ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE ARABS.

5. SHARAF SUMMED UP JORDAN'S CURRENT INTER-ARAB POSITION FOLLOWING SAUDI CROWN PRINCE FAHD VISIT, AS TRYING NOT TO CLOSE THE ROAD TO PEACE. SINCE FAHD CAME TO JORDAN VIA SYRIA WHERE ACCENT WAS ONLY ON THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF ENDING SADAT INITIATIVE (I.E. SADAT SHOULD BREAK OFF DIRECT TALKS) JORDAN EMPHASIZED THE NEED TO KEEP ROAD OPEN TO SOMEHOW CONTINUING PEACE EFFORT. SHARAF SAID JORDAN ALSO TOLD SAUDIS IT WAS NOT ENOUGH TO CRITICIZE U.S. POSITION, BUT THAT WE SHOULD WORK TO KEEP U.S.-ARAB DIALOGUE OPEN.

6. SHARAF INCIDENTALLY SAID HE IS CONVINCED SAUDI INFLUENCE WAS NOT RPT NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR SADAT'S DECISION TO BREAK

OFF TALKS. JORDAN WAS GLAD TO SEE FAHD INTER-ARAB DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE SINCE IT IS ALWAYS WELCOME TO SEE SAUDIS ADOPT A CLEAR POSITION. SHARAF SAID FAHD VISIT TO IRAQ WAS REQUESTED BY EGYPT, SINCE SAUDI-IRAQI RELATIONS HAVE IMPROVED RECENTLY AND SAUDIS WERE THOUGHT ABLE TO EXERCISE SOME POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON IRAQ, OBVIOUSLY NOT TO BLESS PEACE NEGOTIATIONS BUT TO EXERCISE SOME RESTRAINT IN INTER-ARAB CONTEXT.

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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7. FINALLY, SHARAF SAID HE AND KING HAVE GIVEN CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT TO SITUATION SINCE ATHERTON'S LAST VISIT AND LOOK FORWARD TO FORTHCOMING DISCUSSIONS.

8. COMMENT: SHARAF WAS SPEAKING PERSONALLY AND WAS CAREFUL NOT TO BE PINNED DOWN ON ANY DEFINITIVE JORDANIAN POSITION ON CAMP DAVID SUMMIT BEFORE ATHERTON BRIEFS KING HUSSEIN ON U.S. STRATEGY. HOWEVER, WHILE TRYING TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND, IT WAS APPARENT JORDANIANS ARE SKEPTICAL THAT CAMP DAVID SUMMIT WILL PRODUCE SUFFICIENT POSITIVE RESULTS, AND ARE ANXIOUS TO INSURE THAT WAYS BE FOUND TO INSURE THAT POST-SUMMIT PERIOD CONTINUES TO KEEP ROAD OPEN TO PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. SUDDARTH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, CAT-B, PLANNING MEETINGS, SUMMIT MEETINGS, PEACE TALKS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978AMMAN06493
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: n/a
Format: TEL
From: AMMAN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780876/aaaaclih.tel
Line Count: 165
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Message ID: 6db55b65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS, EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Date: 05 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1773623
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MIDEAST NEGOTIATIONS - DISCUSSIONS WITH JORDANIAN COURT CHIEF SHARAF
TAGS: PGOV, JO, US, XF, EG, IS, (SADAT, ANWAR), (SHARAF), (BEGIN, MENACHEM)
To: STATE SS MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6db55b65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014